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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

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QUESTION BOX

How take machine-grease stains from factory clothes?

Mud stains from garden clothes?

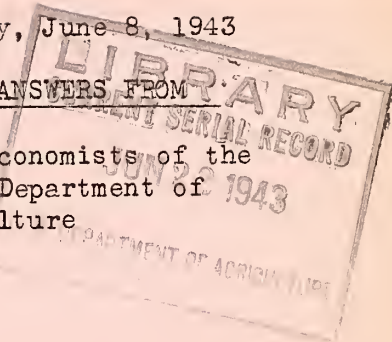
How care for muddy leather shoes?

Gelatin to stiffen rayon dress?

Tuesday, June 8, 1943

ANSWERS FROM

home economists of the
U. S. Department of
Agriculture



--ooOoo--

This week the mailbag brings in a number of letters asking questions about care of clothes in wartime. The answers to these questions come from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The first letter is about machine-grease stains on clothes. The letter says:

"I have a husband and two daughters working in a war factory. Their clothes often come home stained with heavy, dark, dirty, machine grease. I have tried washing these stains, also sponging them with a liquid grease-remover. But I can't get them entirely out. A yellow stain always remains. Even the dry cleaner can't get it out. Will you tell me the right way to remove machine grease stains?"

Margaret Furry, textile chemist of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, says the sooner you can treat these grease stains--or any stains--the better results you will have in removing them. Begin by scraping or brushing the stain to remove any dust, sand, or bits of metal that may be clinging to the grease. Next, loosen the stain by rubbing a little lard or vaseline into it. Rub lightly between the hands. Then scrape off the grease with the dull edge of a knife. Rub with more clean lard. Scrape off again. Finally sponge the stain with carbon tetrachloride or some other grease solvent. You may need to sponge several times to remove all the black grease. But when all traces are out, then the clothes

can go to the laundry or into the washtub. But don't let the stained clothes go into hot soapy water until the grease is out, for the heat sets the stain and leaves that stubborn yellow spot you mention in your letter.

But workers in factories are not the only war workers with problems of stains on clothes. Victory gardeners and farm volunteers also have special questions. One frequent quest is: "What is the best way to get mud stains out of clothes?"

Miss Furry replies that if clothes are of wash material, a soap-and-water bath is the best remedy for the ordinary mud spot. But before you put the clothes in soap and water, let the mud dry...then brush off as much as possible...and rinse several times in cold water. After the cold-water rinse, wash in warm soapy water. But if the mud stain is on clothes that you can't wash, then sponge with denatured or "rubbing" alcohol diluted with water, if you happen to have some in your medicine chest. Or use the remedy your grandmother used--a cut, raw potato. Rub the cut surface of the potato on the spot...let it dry...then brush off the potato starch. The mud comes off with it.

Sometimes mud contains oil or grease. Then you have grease as well as mud to remove. Brush off all dry mud...sponge the spot with a grease solvent...then wash. Once in a while red mud makes a rusty stain which will not disappear by the treatments just mentioned. If you have a rusty mud stain, brush first...then rinse in cool water until the mud rinses out..then treat the stain like an iron-rust stain. The old-time remedy for an iron-rust stain is lemon juice and salt with sunshine.

One point for every gardener to remember about mud is that it does much more damage to leather than to fabric. Mud can do permanent damage to your work shoes or garden shoes...may leave stains impossible to remove by any treatment. So instead of letting mud dry on shoes, remove it at once. Wash it off, if necessary, but try not to get the shoes any wetter than you must. Stuff shoes

with paper. Dry them slowly, away from strong heat. Last of all, rub warm oil into the shoes or softened floor wax. Oil or wax protects leather against moisture, mud, lime, perspiration and other materials that damage it. Keeping your garden shoes well oiled or waxed is one way to save them.

Now from questions about stain, let's turn to one about a filling or finish for a sleazy rayon dress. This letter says: "Recently while I was washing a new pink rayon dress labeled 'washable,' I noticed white chalky powder coming out of the dress into the water. Otherwise, the dress washed and ironed well enough. But where the material had been rather thick...had had some 'body' before washing, it is now slinky and sleazy...creases easily and soon looks wilted. Apparently the white powder that came out in washing was starch or finish of some kind. Could I refinish this dress with starch or some other filler to give it 'body' again?"

Starching is not usually very successful with silk or rayon. But you might have good success with gelatin...just plain cooking gelatin. Gelatin is transparent so is often used to finish silk, fine voile and organdie. Try using a tablespoon of gelatin to 2 quarts of water. First, add a little cold water to the gelatin to soften it just as you do in making gelatin desserts. Then add about 2 quarts of boiling water to 'melt' the gelatin. Just how much water you use depends on how stiff a finish you want. But too much gelatin will make the dress sticky. After you have washed and rinsed your dress, dip it, while still wet, in the gelatin solution. Then wring it out....hang it where it will dry rapidly...press when just barely damp.

Do you know that you are welcome to the free bulletin on stain removal published by the U. S. Department of Agriculture? A postcard will bring it to you. Ask for "Stain Removal", Bulletin 1474, and address your post card to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

